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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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ACYPL Selects Deb Sofield as Delegate to Vietnam

Debra (Deb) Sofield, a Council Member for the City of Greenville, South Carolina, has been selected to join six other rising political figures from across the nation as delegates to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam during a two-week political study program. Sponsored by The American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL), a bipartisan non-profit organization located in Washington, DC, the program with Vietnam will take place August 15-29, 2003.

Upon learning of her selection, Council Member Sofield said, "It is an honor to serve as a delegate and to represent the United States and, specifically, the state of South Carolina and the City of Greenville. I look forward to learning about and experiencing life in Vietnam. And I hope to build lasting relationships with the people who live and govern there."

In preparation for her travels, Council Member Sofield has collected items from various parts of the state to take with her on her trip. "I want to present our Vietnamese hosts with gifts that represent South Carolina's rich culture and history," she explained.

Council Member Sofield will first join the other selected delegates in Washington, DC, for a day of briefings on Vietnam given by U.S. Department of State officials and representatives from the Vietnamese Embassy. The delegates will also meet with local area ACYPL alumni who have in the past traveled to Vietnam to share their experiences.

Upon arrival in Vietnam, the U.S. delegates will be briefed by U.S. Embassy officials and welcomed formally by The Vietnam-USA Society. The two-week program will provide the U.S. delegates opportunities to travel the countryside and interact with rising local, municipal, and national leaders, business communities, and civic groups.

As guests of Vietnam, the American delegates will develop long-standing relations with other young leaders while discussing areas of mutual interests. They will also learn about the differences and similarities in government management as well as local culture and social issues.

Since 1966, ACYPL has conducted bilateral exchanges in order to promote awareness and understanding of the common problems, opportunities, and challenges that face the international community. Over 90 nations in Eastern and Western Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Pacific Rim have participated in exchange programs with ACYPL. ACYPL receives partial funding from the U.S. Department of State and has been endorsed as an important source of education on key foreign policy issues for rising Americans and foreign political leaders.

ACYPL delegates are chosen from a competitive, bipartisan field of candidates who are between the ages of 25 and 40 years old and have exhibited strong leadership during their careers in public or private service. Former ACYPL participants include many current members of the U.S. Congress, U.S. state governors, ambassadors, cabinet secretaries, and foreign prime ministers.

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